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OLD TIME FAVORITES

ABSENCE.

FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE.

Frances Anne Kemble was born in London on November 27, 1809, and died there on January 15, 1893. She was an Anglo-American actress, Shakespearean reader and author and a daughter of Charles Kemble. She made her first public appearance in 1829. She visited America in 1832, and married Pierce Butler in 1834. She lived at Lenox, Mass., and returned to England at intervals.

What shall I do with all the days and hours
That must be counted ere I see thy face?
How shall I charm the interval that lowers
Between this time and that sweet time of grace?

Shall I in slumber steep each weary sense—
Weary with longing? Shall I flee away
Into past days, and with some fond pretence
Cheat myself to forget the present day?

Shall love for thee lay on my soul the sin
Of casting from me God's great gift of time?
Shall I, these mists of memory locked within,
Leave and forget life's purposes sublime?

Oh, how, or by what means, may I contrive
To bring the hour that brings thee back more near?
How may I teach my drooping hope to live
Until that blessed time, and thou art here?

I'll tell thee; for thy sake I will lay hold
Of all good aims, and consecrate to thee,
In worthy deeds, each moment that is told
While thou, beloved one, art far from me.

For thee I will arouse my thoughts to try
All heavenward flights, all high and holy strains;
For thy dear sake I will walk patiently
Through these long hours, nor call their minutes pains.

I will this dreary blank of absence make
A noble task-time; and will therein strive
To follow excellence, and to o'ertake
More good than I have won since yet I live.

So may this doomed time build up in me
A thousand graces, which shall thus be thine;
So may my love and longing hallowed be,
And thy dear thought an influence divine.

IN TOTAL DARKNESS.

A Story of Thrilling Adventure.

By Cecil Hayter.

"EXCHANGE! Hello! hello! Are you there? Nine-three-seven-six, please."

Then, as is customary with the telephone system, there ensued a prolonged silence, during which Kershaw waited with the receiver to his ear wondering whether the presiding deity at Central was trying to switch him through or was deep in the sixteenth chapter of a new serial. That something had been done in answer to his appeal was clear, for there came over the wire the muffled whirr of another call, scraps of conversation—a female voice high pitched in argument—and a sound like footsteps on a stone-flagged passage. Then came a lull, and another scrap of conversation between two people unknown reached him.

"Yes, that's settled—due off by the boat train—I shall be at the station."

"Does he carry them on him?"

"Who takes charge of the matter?"

"The Spider himself."

"Whew! It's a bigger thing than I thought, then. Where will he——"

"He'll start from Charing Cross and travel right through, if necessary."

"Then a quarter of an hour before the train leaves to-night, eh! Oh! and I say—— (angrily) No! don't cut me off yet. Here, Central, I haven't finished"—and then once more silence.

Kershaw dropped the receiver and consulted with himself. He had listened, half unconsciously to the opening sentences; but the mention of one thing—"The Spider"—kept him on the stretch to hear all he could.

He sat down on the nearest chair and whistled softly to himself.

"I wonder," he said under his breath—and again—"I wonder."

"Upon my word, I'm not a great believer in fate or chance, or whatever you call it, as a rule, but, unless I am very much mistaken, that telephone, and the delays and imperfections thereof, have saved my life. The Spider, too—how the deuce has the thing leaked out?"

Forgetting all about the message he had originally intended sending, Kershaw left the club and walked back to his own rooms. Once sure of absolute privacy, he opened a dispatch box and took from it a large, bulky, official-looking envelope; ten minutes' hard work and the manipulation of much stationery enabled him to lay by its side an almost exact duplicate, on the bottom corner of which, for security sake, he placed a small private mark.

Then, taking from a cupboard a heavy fur-lined overcoat, he ruthlessly slit up one of the seams with a penknife, just below where the sleeve joined on; into this opening he slipped the original envelope and stitched it carefully in position.

The duplicate, together with a handful of unimportant documents, he replaced in the dispatch box and began changing into traveling clothes. He had barely completed this when there came a knock at the door and Sir Edgar Trailton, a reserved, distinguished-looking man of fifty or so, entered.

"Nearly ready, Kershaw?" he said.

"Quite," was the prompt answer.

The elder man looked at him keenly. "You fully understand the importance of those papers? They must reach the embassy at Constantinople, intact, at any cost. There has been too much pilfering and tampering with the mail bags lately. If those particular dispatches were to fall into wrong hands I am authorized to tell you plainly that it means war—war of a very grim order just when we want it least, also their value in the hands of unscrupulous people would be calculated in sums to make a Rothschild envious."

Kershaw hesitated.

"Well," said Sir Edgar hastily, "what is it? Do you want to back out of the responsibility?"

"Not in the least, but quite by chance I overheard a few words on the telephone just now, and I believe the man they call The Spider has got wind of the matter, and is going to have a try for them."

Sir Edgar looked grave and his face hardened. "That man is the fiend incarnate. He gives more trouble and is more dangerous than half the secret services of Europe."

"I have heard a lot about him, but have never seen him. Could you give me any information?"

"That's the extraordinary thing. The man is always cropping up and causing infinite difficulties, but no one seems to have the vaguest idea what he is like. He is French by birth—the most cunning and dangerous brute in creation, and stone blind. So much I know—no more."

"Blind!" said Kershaw in astonishment.

"Absolutely, though few people, however, guessed it. He has a lot of paid spies to do rough work. But, in spite of his infirmity, he always carries through his big coups alone and unaided, trusting no one and keeping his own counsel."

Kershaw felt slightly skeptical, and realizing that time was running short, if he wished to dine before his journey, he said good-bye to Sir Edgar Trailton, and had his luggage put on a hansom.

There were not many passengers by the mail, and Kershaw could, if he had chosen, have had a carriage to himself. But an officious porter had already placed his things in a compartment in which there was an old clergyman already seated, puffing away at a cigar and reading a yellow book with an air of great enjoyment.

He looked up as Kershaw got in and then resumed his reading, and the train started off.

After some time Kershaw pulled out his case and lit a cigarette. The old clergyman held out his hand with a smile. "Excuse me," said he, "but could you give me a light?"

Kershaw handed him the still flaming match, which the other took, and relit his cigar. Then a strange little accident happened. The man threw away the match, which, being nearly burnt down, stuck slightly to his fingers, so that, instead of going on to the floor as intended, it fell on the cushion of the seat opposite, still alight. Now that in itself was nothing, but what was extraordinary was that the old man picked up his book and resumed his reading, with the match burning the seat almost under his nose.

Kershaw was about to give an exclamation of surprise, when suddenly Sir Edgar's words came back to him. "The man is stone blind." The book, the little bit of bravado in asking for a light, the disguise, was all simply a ruse. The man was blind, but had it not been for the trivial accident of the falling match Kershaw would have staked his last farthing against such a supposition. Obviously the thing to do was not to let the man know he was discovered. Very cautiously he stretched out his walking stick and extinguished the fire before the cloth began to smell. So far, so good, and he was holder of a trump card.

It was a nasty, choppy night when the train drew up alongside the quay; the wind, blowing a quarter gale, whistled and moaned through the boat's shrouds, and made the draughty customs sheds quiver with each fierce gust.

Kershaw snatched up his things, beckoned a porter, and hurried on board. He had had thoughts of spending his time in the smoking-room, but on second consideration he thought he would be more secure in a private stateroom, so he took possession of a deck cabin, and, having seen his luggage carefully deposited therein, he bolted the door, placed his portmanteau against it, wrapped himself in his rug and settled down.

The tramp, tramp of many feet, the moaning of the wind and the cries of the deck hands getting the luggage on board, formed themselves into a monotonous chorus, and he dozed over his novel; then came the sharp ting, ting of the engine-room signals, the faint, continuous rhythm of the engines themselves, gathering in speed and force as the boat crept slowly into the heavy weather outside. The book slid from his hand and he fell into a sleep only rendered deeper by the heavy rolling of the vessel.

When he woke it was with a start. The cabin was in total darkness, though he had purposely left the electric light full on. It was so black that it was impossible to distinguish even the barest outlines of anything. Yet he was convinced that he was no longer alone in the room. Some one had forced the door, and he was groping about quite close to him.

He held his breath and listened, but the din outside was too great. Cautiously he stretched out a hand. Then steadying himself as well as he could, he moved round inch by inch toward the door. He was in a way at a disadvantage—The Spider was blind, and therefore accustomed to darkness, while he was heavily handicapped by it. But of one thing he felt certain, that though some one had entered unawares, they were not going to get out without trying conclusions with him.

The ship lurched and backed, and every now and then came the clatter of something falling. The darkness, to his excited nerves, seemed to grow thicker every second—and he never knew but what he might feel a few inches of cold steel in his ribs before he could move hand or foot. For The Spider's senses were so marvelously acute that it was quite impossible he should not have been able to detect Kershaw's movement.

Then there came a lurch and a stagger heavier than usual as a big mass of water struck the boat—something swayed forward and touched him lightly; but it was sufficient; he clutched at it with both hands and brought up his knee with a jerk—it was no time for niceties. There was a crack—a stifled cry—and the tinkle of steel; he had snapped the man's forearm above the wrist joint—the next instant they

Kershaw picked himself up, groped hurriedly for the electric light switch and flooded the cabin with light, but too late—the door was swinging wide, and The Spider had vanished, broken arm and all, leaving as traces of his visit the dispatch-box neatly severed at the hinges, and on the floor a businesslike looking knife. Kershaw glanced round for his fur coat, and heaved a sigh of relief—that at any rate was safe, with its valuable contents stowed away in the lining. But the dummy envelope was gone from the dispatch-box. He rang for the steward and, without giving any reasons, asked him to find out for him the whereabouts of the clergyman who had come aboard. The man went, but returned in a few minutes saying that there was no such person to be found. The Spider had vanished. For once in his life he had made a complete failure.

As the train was moving out of the station en route for Paris, however, Kershaw saw a youngish-looking man, dressed as a bicyclist, being helped into the train. He had his arm in a sling, and was explaining to an acquaintance that he had slipped on the wet decks and sprained his wrist.

Kershaw also noticed, with grim amusement, that in the man's left breast pocket there were outward and visible signs of a bulky package of sorts, and blessed the much-abused telephone system of his native land.—New York News.

Rabbits as Acrobats.

The rat is, as no one will doubt, a very fair climber. He can scamper about anywhere on the roof of a barn or can ascend the ivy that grows on the house wall, and make the lives of the pigeons in their cotes anything but happy ones. The rabbit, on the other hand, is not usually accounted a climbing animal. A writer in Field describes the astonishment of his sister at seeing a rabbit jump from the bough of a tree, and, picking itself up, "scamper off rather dazed to its warren." Whenever a rabbit is found in a tree, except when he is carried there by a receding snowdrift, it will be found that a sloping trunk or other easy method of approach has been made use of. He is, however, very expert at climbing stone walls that bound his fields, and even the wire netting that the farmer vainly imagines will keep him from the choicest crops. We have seen rabbits run up the face of a quarry to their holes toward the top, a feat which we have not found it easy to imitate.

Beau Nash's Successor.

Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esq., M. C., welcomed Mr. Pickwick to Bath in fiction, and Beau Nash was, in fact, the greatest master of ceremonies on record. For many years the office has been in suspension, and the man who welcomes you at Bath is the ticket collector on the airy platforms of the railway station. But Bath is pulling itself together. After nearly a quarter of a century of suspended animation the M. C. is revived, in the person of Major Charles Henry Simpson, who has already been Mayor. It will be Major Simpson's duty and pleasure to arrange balls, entertainments and other amusements and act as president in a republic of pleasure. It will be interesting to see how he carries on a tradition which is as famous in fact as in fiction.—London Chronicle.

Waste of Time.

There had been a slight shock of earthquake, and Mr. Herlihy and Mr. Dolan had both felt it.

"Tim," said Mr. Dolan, solemnly, "what did you think whin firrst the ground began to trimble?"

"Think?" echoed his friend, scornfully. "What man that had the use av his legs to run and his loongs to roar would waste his toime thinkin'? Tell me thot!"—Youth's Companion.

An Ancient Overcoat.

Report has it that a prominent citizen of Petersburg, Va., wears an overcoat for which he paid $45 in Baltimore in 1844. It is of English pilot cloth, and although it has been worn every winter for fifty-six years it is said to be still a respectable-looking garment.

A SHRINE.

She sits and sews in the window there—
The sunshine round her lingers,
Just touching her braids of bright brown hair
And slender busy fingers.
And she fashions garments fair and fine
For the dear little baby—hers and mine.

Her swift white fingers can scarce keep pace
As down the years she glances,
And sews into folds of mull and lace
Her own sweet thoughts and fancies.
And her eyes are bright with light divine
As she croons to the baby—hers and mine.

She drops her work when the daylight dies—
I see them rocking, rocking—
There are dimpled arms, two dear, dark eyes,
A wee blue shoe and stocking.
And my heart bends low before the shrine
Of my wife and the baby—hers and mine.
—Alice E. Allen, in Good Housekeeping.

Jingles and Jests

"Mamma," asked Young Curiosity, "when deaf-and-dumb people cheer, do their fingers get tired?"—Lippincott's.

"I don't intend to be married until I am over thirty." "And I don't intend to be over thirty until I am married."—Town Topics.

Mother—"Why, Alice, don't you love your baby brother?" Alice—"What's the use? He wouldn't know it if I did."—Town Topics.

Miss Giddy—"I suppose you medical students have some gay times." Young Medicus—"Yes, we do cut up quite a good deal."—Chicago News.

He doesn't care for money,
His purse, so far from slim
Is big enough, they say, to make
His money care for him.
—Washington Star.

"Her marriage was a great disappointment to her friends." "Indeed?" "Oh, yes. They all predicted it would turn out unhappily, and it didn't."—Judge.

Teacher—"Johnny, you've been fighting." Johnny—"Yes'm; Jimmie Brown said his teacher was prettier than you, an' I licked him till he took it back."—Pick-Me-Up.

She meditated, with growing anger. Suddenly she grasped a bottle of hair-line and, hurling it across the room, shrieked, "Ha! The dye is cast!"—Princeton Tiger.

"What is an asteroid?" asked the instructor of the class. "An asteroid," replied the young woman with the pert nose, "is an understudy to a star."—Chicago Tribune.

Richard — "Your fourteen-year-old daughter seems to be a very capable girl." Robert—"Oh, yes; she has her mother and me under perfect control."—Detroit Free Press.

He—"I don't see how you can say such terrible things about another woman." She—"You don't understand, you silly. Why, Carrie is my dearest friend."—Boston Transcript.

Stranger—"You have a fine links here. Do you play much?" The Other One—"Me play? Well, I guess not. There's nothing daffy about me. I'm the caddy, I am."—Boston Transcript.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder"
Is an axiom most pleasant—
But affection rather flickers
If it's absence of a present.
—Chicago Tribune.

"There is one very suspicious thing I have noticed about the man who says 'I told you so,'" remarked the observer of events and things. "He never seems to come out with a new hat after election."—Yonkers Statesman.

The savage regarded the first white man thoughtfully. "If I try to fight him," he said, "he will exterminate me, and if I try to live in peace with him he will cheat me out of everything and I will starve to death. What chance have I got?"—Chicago Post.

The Elk Dying Out.

An animal which is rapidly dying out, and which is unknown on English hunting grounds, is the elk. In Germany only the Kaiser is the proud possessor of a few hundreds of these giants of the forest. They are kept in the imperial forest of Ibenhorst, in Eastern Prussia, and are only allowed to be hunted by a special permit from the Kaiser, signed by him personally, and then only a certain number may be shot.

Lightning Clouds.

Lightning clouds are seldom more than 700 yards from the earth.